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D.A.'s JFK Death 'Discoveries' Parallel Warren Critic Theories

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NEW ORLEANS, La. — Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's widely publicized "discoveries" about who killed President Kennedy, and how the incredibly complex deed was accomplished, paralell theories of the crime first propounded by authors of books critical of the Warren Commission report.

Federal agents have remained silent on the phenomenon of demonology that seems to have captivated the imagination of many Americans, especially those of college age.

Privately, they say that continuous examination of Garrison's "evidence" and the allegations of such self-appointed investigators as Mark Lane ("Rush to Judgment") and Harold Weisberg ("Whitewash") reveal nothing that is new or helpful.

All such evidence and allegations have been checked against the voluminous files of the manifold government intelligence services. But Garrison and Lane, now working together, have apparently succeeded nonetheless in convincing many that the "government" is lying, concealing the truth and covering up its past mistakes.

Speculation as to the true origin of Garrison's investigation, considering the early influence and later participation of Warren Report critics such as Lane and Weisberg, includes the comment of John Sparrow, English academician, in the London Times' literary supplement.

Sparrow cites "evidence of association between those who have criticized the (Warren) report."

"If the critics turned their scrutiny upon themselves they might well detect in their own activities evidence of a sinister combination," he says. And, he observes, "throughout four years America has been dragnetted, hundreds of witnesses have been interviewed, no money and no effort has been spared — and the nets are empty, save for a handful of homosexuals and other queer fish in New Orleans.

Is it possible, then, that Garrison has embraced portions of several postulations in the titillating books and articles that set the country to wondering about the assassination in mid-1966?

For its is true that Garrison's "proof" was allegedly uncovered after public skepticism about the Warren Report had reached its apogee in opinion polls.

Position Complicated

The government's position in this disturbing controversy is complicated by two probable facts:

1. Its original decision to withhold and classify information and evidence gathered in support of the Warren Commission's final report was hasty and ill-advised. The volume and types of material withdrawn from public view were excessive and, some of it, harmless.

2. The generally accepted role of the Central Intelligence Agency in the arming and training of anti-Castro rebels at camps in Louisiana and Mississippi clouded the true status of certain pre-assassination figures in and around Orleans parish.

In the first instance the government is left vulnerable to the charge, however irrelevant and spurious, of wilfully concealing evidence that reflects adversely on its own integrity and competence.

In the case of the CIA, the agency is now being hoisted on its own petard of what it believes to be essential immunity from disclosure, and what others believe to be obsessive involvement with and manipulation of groups and individuals in the national interest.

It makes little difference a this point that nothing in the national archives supports the convoluted schemes of conspiracy now claimed by Garrison; or that the existence of one-time CIA agents or employes does not prove that they were ever recruited to murder a president.

Mystery Is An Element

People who love a mystery, and certainly one arising from an unbelievable and sinister sequence of events culminating in shocking assassination and murder (the latter viewed by millions on television) are beguiled by secrecy, not reassured or persuaded by it.

However complicated and awkward the government's position is, however, that of Garrison seems inexcusable and intolerable. For his "trail by publicity" seems to foredoom the success of his case, even if it is ever established that he has one that is actionable.

He has ascribed complicity and motives of murder and conspiracy to the defenseless dead.

He has asserted over and over again what can be no more than a presumption of "proof" and guilt of a plot and to plotters. He has, however, named only one — Clay L. Shaw — while two of his alleged coconspirators are in their graves.

He has made it appear that all instrumentalities and officials of government other than his own office, including the federal agencies, the presidential commission of distinguished citizens and the presidency itself, are concealing and destroying evidence and obstructing the processes of justice.

Faces Accusations

But he faces mounting charges of misusing the processes of justice himself, including the grand jury, the interrogation of witnesses and the collection of evidence.

And Jim Garrison appears to have grossly violated canons of the bench and bar, both in fact and in spirit, by endless, prejudicial, premature and mischievous public discussion of a nationally critical case that has barely advanced beyond the headline stage in more than one year.

The federal judiciary of Louisiana was asked to intervene to restrain Garrison's oppressive use of the subpoena power, and responded immediately and favorably. But the attorney general of that state has ignored pleas by the Metropolitan Crime Commission of New Orleans to investigate charges of Garrison's irregularities, misconduct and even the commission of "crimes" against both the state and harassed citizens.

The American Bar Association has said or done nothing.

The Orleans Parish Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union has offered muted objections to Garrison's tactics, but the parent body — historically proud of its role as "watchdog of civil liberties" — has remained silent.

Garrison himself, in what may prove to have been his most truly prophetic statement, said early in his probe of the Kennedy assassination:

"The key to the whole case is through the looking glass. Black is white; white is black. I don't want to be cryptic, but that's the way it is."

Lane, Weisberg and other citizen-critics and authors of scathing tracts on the Warren Report exercise their rights of free speech and free press under the First Amendment. The effect of their words may be unfortunate, even deplorable. But their right to criticize, in harshest terms, is unassailable.

Garrison, however, is an "officer of the court," a public official with special responsibilities to protect the rights, privileges and immunities of individuals under the constitution as well as to enforce the laws of Louisiana.

Now, regardless of what Garrison finally turns up in his privately-financed investigation, some of his methods would seem to inspire examination and censure.